

KUDOS TO THE STORM TEAM...

By Bob Durand, Secretary of Environmental Affairs

When hurricane season hits, the Storm Team (technically known as the Massachusetts Rapid Response Coastal Storm Damage Assessment Team) is ready to spring into action. State, local, and federal team members volunteer to venture out immediately after

a major storm to provide valuable information on the location and extent of damage. These timely reports help to target emergency services, expedite disaster relief, keep coastal residents safe, minimize property damage, and develop plans to reduce future impacts. Although all of the hearty Storm Team volunteers deserve tremendous thanks for going out in horizontal rain, hurricane-force winds, knee-deep snow, and whatever else a storm can throw at them, the efforts of two individuals stand out—Rebecca Haney and Joe Pelczarski.

Rebecca Haney, Coastal Geologist from the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) serves as team leader, making sure that all areas are covered, giving direction and advice to

team volunteers, and staying in constant contact with management to determine when the team should be deployed. Rebecca's focused dedication provides the extensive support team members need

to perform meaningful assessments under difficult conditions. CZM's Joe Pelczarski, who serves as the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) emergency management liaison, also plays a critical role from the state's emergency operations center at the "Bunker," which is operated by the

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). Joe fields calls from the Storm Team, analyzes the incoming information, and conveys critical details to the appropriate officials so communities get the help they need as soon as possible. Joe's around-the-clock efforts are invaluable, and he has become the "go-to-guy" and institutional memory for the others who staff the Bunker.

Through the efforts of Joe, Rebecca, and other volunteers, the Storm Team helps the Commonwealth and its communities get federal disaster relief funds as quickly as possible. Before the team was established, damage estimates weren't calculated until after the storm had passed, and officials evaluating the damage were unaware of which areas were hardest hit. This delay posed significant hardship to homeowners and communities in need of financial assistance to repair and rebuild after coastal storms. By assessing damage during the storm, the Storm Team significantly shortens the process by identifying areas that are eligible for relief and providing initial damage estimates. This information is used by MEMA personnel to provide federal officials with the details they need to process federal assistance claims. For individuals and communities facing the daunting prospect of cleanup and rebuilding, this streamlined process is incredibly important, reducing the financial costs of lost business days and temporary relocation.

EOEA is proud of the Storm Team and its dedicated leaders who serve the Commonwealth in its times of greatest need. That is why I nominated Joe and Rebecca for a Commonwealth Citation for Outstanding Performance, an honor they received and richly deserve. And if on television you happen to see Rebecca in her raingear or Joe at the Bunker, you may rest assured they are going beyond the call of duty to help protect the citizens of Massachusetts.



SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS BOB DURAND WITH COMMONWEALTH CITATION FOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE AWARD WINNERS, JOE PELCZARSKI AND REBECCA HANEY.



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